
Refocusing Secondary Education

A Conceptual Framework

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The Reason for the Work

Outcomes for too many students entering and exiting Kentucky's high schools are inequitable and unacceptable. Too many students do not complete high school and, even among those who do, too many are unprepared to take their place in postsecondary education, the workforce or the military. The situation in Kentucky is not atypical and is part of a growing crisis impacting our state and our nation. The fact is that high schools remain largely unchanged despite substantial changes in the economy and in our society. Yet, it is not clear that state and local policy have done enough to focus secondary schools on evolved 21st century expectations. Rather than concentrating on reforming or redesigning the institution of the schools themselves, Kentucky has chosen to focus on the student.

Kentucky's vision for high school students is that each one will reach proficiency and transition from the K12 system prepared to participate successfully in a next level of learning in both postsecondary education and the workforce - not simply one or the other. Preparation has multiple dimensions, including mastery of academic expectations, the ability to apply that knowledge in real world situations, development of personal and social skills, a thoughtful career plan, and the new types of literacy needed to be competitive in the 21st century economy. The credentials awarded by high schools must be valued by the students themselves, postsecondary education, business and industry and local communities because they adequately and accurately represent the achievement, interests and abilities of an individual. High schools can no longer be considered an end point in education; high schools must function and be held accountable as pathways to next and higher levels of learning for all.

Like the schools themselves, state and local policy lag behind in creating systems of incentives and accountability that refocus both educators and students on higher levels of individual achievement against clearly articulated standards and expectations. There appear to be a serious disconnects between expectations and outcomes, and the stakes are high. For these reasons, the Kentucky Department of Education is introducing this Framework to identify the Why, What and How of securing better outcomes for all Kentucky students. It will function to ensure that all aspects of work impacting middle and high schools, as well as the alignment between high school and postsecondary experiences, are focused on:

- Zero Dropouts - Supporting every student to persist to graduation with a plan for transitioning to the next level of learning
 - A Learning Guarantee - Readying every student to leave high school prepared to participate in the next level of learning without need for remediation; and,
 - A Plan for Life - Providing every student with the opportunity to perform at high levels in a chosen field.
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The scope of work addressed within the Framework embraces students from the middle grades through high school and on to postsecondary education or training. The Framework uses as organizers three elements or areas of focus:

1. Progression Based on Performance in a Rigorous Curriculum - Aligned Standards, Incentives and Expectations
2. Personalized Services and Supports - Building Relationships that Create Success
3. Expanded Learning Opportunity - Invoking Communities of Geography, Academics and Practice to Make Learning Relevant

These three areas of focus are related but the activities within them can be distinguished as belonging primarily to one area of work or another. On the other hand, there are underlying principles or guideposts that should be infused throughout all three elements:

- The attainment and application of 21st Century Literacy Skills, adapted from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills;
- The Rigor and Relevance Framework developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education; and
- The Guiding Principles developed by the Refocusing Secondary team.

Using these additional dimensions, which incorporate many of the critical thinking and problem solving capacities and habits of mind that we value, will help ensure that work does not become activity-driven, but remains focused on outcomes for students. In other words, all recommendations coming out of the three areas of work must be designed to reflect all of the dimensions of a proficient student.

The Organization and Purpose of this Document

The Framework is organized into three domains:

- Why?** The public message about why the secondary experience needs to change to produce different and better outcomes for young people. Why should we care? What are the imperatives, both moral and economic?
- What?** Identifying what needs to change and helping build a shared understanding of the vision. What do students really need to know? At what level should they perform? How will we know what they know? What does Proficiency look like?
- How?** How do we transform beliefs into practice? How do we free resources to engage in and lead change, placing incentives in the system to move away from the status quo? How do we operationalize efficiently and effectively?

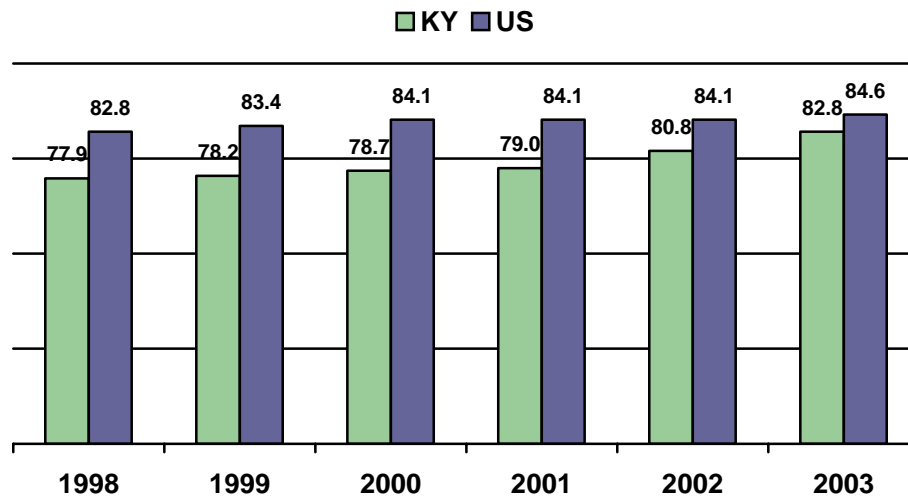
In Kentucky today, there are numerous organizations and programs addressing aspects of secondary education. There is a great deal of program activity and policy-making at the regional, state and national levels impacting middle and high schools. A primary purpose of this Framework is to provide a focal point for identification, analysis and policy-making around key issues so that connections can be recognized and resources focused on shared goals.

It will be revised frequently and expanded to adapt to the continuing nature of the work.

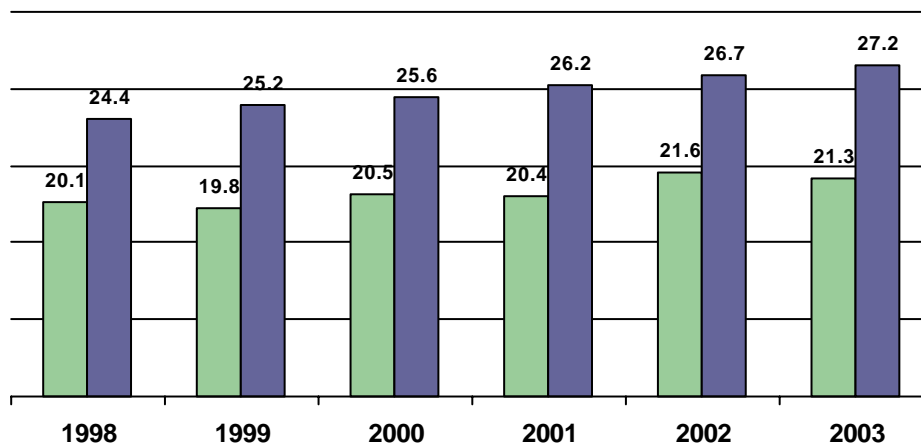
2 Why should we engage in creating and sustaining 21st century high schools?

Kentucky is combating a legacy of under education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Kentucky's educational attainment is below the U.S. averages:

Kentuckians 25 years and older with a high school diploma, or equivalent.*



Kentuckians 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher.*

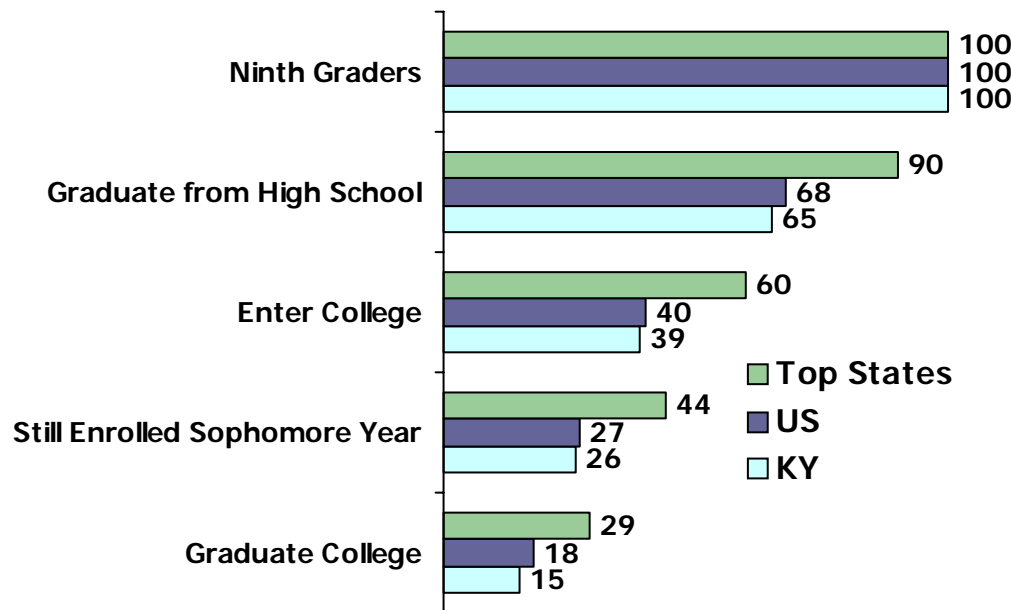


More alarming may be the statistics related to the in and out migration of adults by education level. During the years 1995 - 2000, for ages 22 - 29:

- Kentucky's greatest gain was young adults with less than high school completion (6,264).
- Our baccalaureate graduates are lost early (-1,398).
- Knowledge worker occupations (teachers, scientists, finance professionals) are among those with the highest rates of migration.

While Kentucky has improved its graduation rate substantially in the past few years, 35% of the students who enter ninth grade still do not graduate. Of the original 100 in the cohort, only 39 enter college and only 26 of those are still enrolled after their sophomore year. Of the original 100 students, only 15 graduate with a 2-year degree within four years or a 4-year degree within 6 years. College graduates earn on average 70% more than high school graduates. High school dropouts are four times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed.

Given what we know about educational attainment and the net migration of jobs and people in the older age groups, it is critical that Kentucky increase the graduation rate at both the high school and college levels and find ways to keep our brightest and most promising young citizens in the state.



*Source: WICHE, NCES, ACT, NCES-IPEDS Graduation Rate and Fall Enrollment Surveys from a presentation by the Council on Postsecondary Education, 7.12.2004

Among students in Kentucky who do graduate from high school and go on to college, large numbers are not prepared for college work. Nationally, about one of every three freshmen takes at least one remedial course in math, reading or writing. In Kentucky, remediation rates are much higher at 2-year colleges than at four-year public institutions and are significantly higher statewide for students scoring below 18 on the ACT.

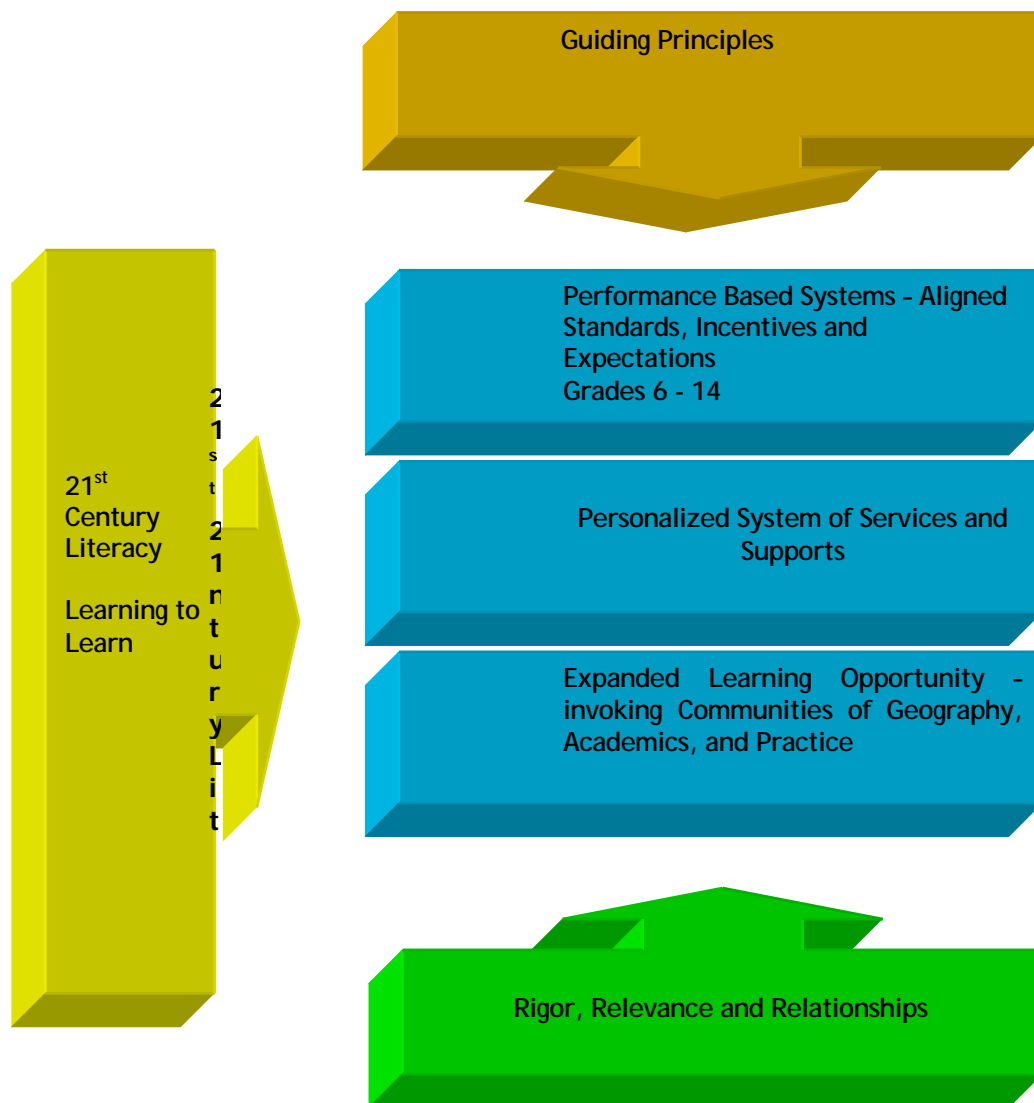
	Four Year Institutions			Two Year Colleges	
English	Scoring In Range	Placed in Remediation		Scoring In Range	Placed in Remediation
When ACT Score > or = 18	77%	0%		50%	5%
When ACT Score < 18	23%	34%		50%	55%
% Class in Eng Remediation		8%			30%
	Four Year Institutions			Two Year Colleges	
Math	Scoring In Range	Placed in Remediation		Scoring In Range	Placed in Remediation
When ACT Score > or = 18	71%	12%		38%	22%
When ACT Score < 18	29%	77%		62%	81%
% Taking any Remedial		29%			57%

It is clear that students taking remedial courses are at much higher risk of not persisting to a degree. Nationally, only 45% of students enrolled in one remedial course complete a bachelor's degree. For students enrolled in three or more remedial courses (including reading), degree attainment is only 18%.

If the purpose of secondary education is to prepare students to leave high school prepared to participate in the next level of learning, and if we understand the risks that are imposed on students when they are not prepared, why do we continue to send such large numbers of them out into the world who are clearly not ready?

3 What should secondary education look like and what should we expect for students?

Below is a graphic depiction of the three elements within which work will be organized as well as the three supporting dimensions that will guide the work.



Performance Based Systems - Aligned Standards, Incentives and Expectations Grades 6 - 14

All of the most recent high school reform studies and initiatives make recommendations related to increasing rigor in the curriculum and holding students accountable for higher levels of learning. Several, chief among them being the American Diploma Project and the State Scholars program, recommend establishing a new, more rigorous default curriculum. In Kentucky, the idea of establishing the precollege curriculum as the default curriculum has received a high level of interest. Yet, while more students are participating in these courses, results on national and state accountability tests do not reflect that students are indeed learning at higher levels in proportional numbers.

According to the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Kentucky ranked in the top 10 in students taking challenging math courses (Algebra II or higher). At the same time, we exceed the average in percent of entering freshmen taking remedial courses. In other words, simply adopting the precollege curriculum or any specific course-taking sequence as the default curriculum does not produce higher levels of learning for all students. A study by the National Association of System Heads, the Education Trust research and other recent reports find that:

- The titles of courses may change, but the curriculum may not.
- Curriculum slippage is greater at the high school level than at the lower grade levels.
- Expectations are often different for different groups of students, such that an "A" in a high poverty school would earn a "C" or "D" in a more affluent school.

This means that the challenge of establishing a common core of rigorous standards goes well beyond increasing the numbers of students in precollege curriculum or other higher-level courses. In this context, clearly articulating the standards and holding teachers and students accountable for meeting those standards functions as an indicator of instructional equity.

An important learning from the American Diploma Project, the State Scholars Program, and the work of the International Center for Leadership in Education is that the requirements for workforce and postsecondary are converging. Therefore, is the term "pre-college curriculum" as synonymous with a more rigorous curriculum as opposed to a curriculum for students preparing for the workforce even appropriate? Regardless, if any path is not appropriate to prepare students for both postsecondary education and the workforce, it should be eliminated from the system.

The work that must be done to provide a performance-based system for students and move schools away from the Carnegie Unit is closely related to, and dependent upon, other efforts already well underway: P16 standards alignment; CPE's initiative to establish more standard admissions and placement criteria across Kentucky's colleges and universities; and the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) work on providing a comprehensive system of technology-enabled assessment.

The following describes major components of work proposed for the coming year:

Vanguard Implementations of Performance-based Systems

As part of the ongoing Refocusing Secondary work, the Department is currently supporting schools that are moving to standards-based instructional models. These schools are attempting to:

- Clarify the standards and how they are valued, including identifying those that are essential and requisite for learning at the next level

- Align curriculum, instruction and assessments to the standards - placing emphasis on what is more highly valued
- Measure against the external standards and hold students and teachers accountable for the outcomes
- Share outcomes and results with teachers, students, and parents through standards-based progress reports and grades
- Use diagnostic and formative assessments to influence instruction, and to group and regroup students based on their mastery levels and needs for interventions
- Provide students with options in learning and demonstrating their learning that are not only rigorous but relevant
- Credential learning, rather than time
- Build deliberate variability into schedules, calendars and teaching assignments to accommodate students who progress at different levels
- Hold all students accountable for making continuous progress against the same standards, but not at the same pace

The Vanguard sites engaged in this work have taken varied approaches and they all are facing significant challenges. Still, each report success for students and each is expanding their initiative. No site has faltered. As we approach the 2004-05 school year, additional districts are coming forward to be engaged in the work.

Beginning in September 2004, a new partnership of four districts will come together to begin work on a system of standards-driven, performance-based mathematics. This multi-district initiative will impact the largest number of students and teachers to date. Their efforts will yield valuable instructional resources that can be shared with other districts through the new Teaching Tools website. These districts, as well as the original Vanguard sites, will likely be among the first to use End-of-Course Assessments as the basis on which credits are awarded.

The Department will also be working with these districts to examine the role of textbooks and instructional materials in standards-driven systems. The schools have questions about if and how traditional textbooks fit into a highly individualized, instructional model, especially when the use of technology is pervasive.

End of Course Assessments

The Board has previously approved the Department's plan to make End-of-Course Assessments (EOCAs) available. The next step is to develop a statewide strategy for using EOCAs to improve student performance and link the timing of progression to readiness for the next level of learning. The Department will identify a diverse set of school districts that will adopt KDE-provided end-of-course assessments as the basis of granting mathematics credit in the 2004/05 school year. Based on the experiences of these districts and the outcomes for students, the Department will recommend to the Board no later than June 2005 a comprehensive strategy for incorporating EOCAs into the statewide system. Specific areas of study include:

- Student accountability
- Grade inflation
- Teacher accountability and value-added to student learning
- Diagnosing needs for professional development
- Credentialing diverse learning paths and experiences
- Promotion and high school graduation requirements

In addition, the Department will:

- Develop recommendations concerning the use of EOAs as incentives for higher student performance, such as using EOAs as one criterion for awarding the Commonwealth Diploma and KES Scholarship Funds.
- Work with the Council on Postsecondary Education to identify the feasibility of using EOAs as a component of the college admissions and placement process and as the basis for awarding credit in dual credit partnerships.
- Investigate the potential to substitute scores on certain national assessments (Advanced Placement and ACT WorkKeys, for instance) in lieu of state-provided EOAs as the basis for awarding credit.
- Work with all districts to prepare them for incorporation of EOAs in subsequent years.

EOAs for secondary mathematics will be available in Spring 2005. Work on acquiring and making available EOAs in additional content areas will continue throughout the 2004-05 year. The Department will report on the progress of this work at the February 2004 Board meeting. Final recommendations will be delivered to the Board in June 2005.

Graduation Requirements and Mathematics

The American Diploma Project, the Kentucky Scholars Program, and much of the national policy debate around high schools call for adoption of a default college preparatory curriculum, and discussion of whether all students should be expected to complete Algebra II figures prominently. In Kentucky we know that while increasing numbers of students are taking courses titled Algebra II, we have not seen the anticipated decrease in mathematics remediation rates. Similarly, as schools move to performance-based credit systems in which students progress based on mastery of standards, those standards must be clearly articulated. Regardless of what the courses are called, students should participate in courses that prepare them for mastery of 100% of the core content so that they have a strong foundation for postsecondary education and work.

In October 2004, the Department will make a recommendation to the Board concerning secondary preparation in mathematics. The recommendations will address changes to the Core Content for Assessment and Program of Studies, graduation requirements, and the question of whether all students should participate in some form of mathematics study every year.

Personalized System of Services and Supports

Implementation of more standards-driven systems where learning is credentialed based on performance and learning is not bound by time nor place, introduces real opportunity to move students to a learning environment that is very different from the failure model we see in many schools today. We need to make the shift from a system that expects the student to be responsive to its organizational and operational needs, to a system that is enabled to be responsive to the learning service and support needs of each student.

The following describes major components of work proposed for the coming year:

Individualized Student Planning

The Department recently received approval from the Commonwealth Office of Technology and the Capital Construction and Bond Oversight Review Committees to proceed with release of the Request for Proposals that will result in the web-enabled individual learning plan. In preparation for the rollout of that tool, the Department will be identifying the critical attributes of highly effective advising programs and developing recommendations on how to ensure that all students have access to these services.

The Department will update the Board in December 2004 on progress. Recommendations will be forthcoming as implementation proceeds, with scheduling of Board discussions timed to guide transition:

- Policy recommendations to introduce a higher level of accountability into the student planning process as a high school graduation requirement as soon as the web-enabled tool is available. The intent is to ensure that all students are receiving sufficient and appropriate guidance from school professionals with whom they have a meaningful relationship on a continuing basis.
- The feasibility of entering into Memoranda of Agreement with practitioners from districts that are using an individual student planning process in highly effective ways to lead professional development and mentor others.
- Identifying and creating linkages from the individual student planning process to other processes to create efficiencies for school systems and add value to students. For example: the use of the student plan in admissions and placement processes; to facilitate more frequent communication with and involvement from parents; and to match students with learning opportunities beyond the schoolhouse.
- Ways to involve advocates and mentors outside the school in strategic thinking about an individual student and his or her future.
- Strategies to improve communications with parents about the information and services they need in order to help the student fulfill his or her goals.
- Use of the plan as a portfolio of the student's secondary education experience.
- Guidance to districts on using the individual student plan to make decisions about course-taking, extra and co-curricular activities, interventions and support services, relevant assessments, and expanded learning opportunities aligned with the student's interests, aptitudes and aspirations. As students progress through secondary school, they will assume more responsibility for refining and personalizing their plans.

Reinforcing the Middle Grades Connection - Preparing Students for Success in High School

Research tells us that failing the 9th grade is probably the strongest risk factor for dropping out. New research from Johns Hopkins University makes a strong correlation between middle schools with low eighth-grade NAEP scores and high schools with low graduation rates, particularly among minority students. Still, the recent national initiatives addressing high school reform largely confine the scope of work to the 9th through 12th grades.

In fact, a review of Kentucky's dropout data makes it obvious that this problem materializes well before the student reaches high school and must be addressed before the student reaches high school.

The Department will bring forward a series of recommendations addressing the middle to high school transition in April 2005. This work will not be an evaluation of existing middle school programs. Rather, it will attempt to identify the essential services and supports that must be provided for students in the middle grades if they are to transition successfully to and through the high school. Models and practices from districts that are doing this work successfully will be studied and shared. This work will not be confined to but will focus on math and literacy and will address topics such as:

- Clearly defined academic expectations and outcomes for exiting middle school students
- Specific diagnostics in reading and math
- Curriculum design including course structure, integrated content
- Recommendations on algebra before 9th grade

- Student accountability in the middle grades
- Indicators that signal risk for failure at the 9th grade
- Intensive intervention strategies for students with underdeveloped knowledge and skills
- Strategies for ending social promotion to high school, such as positioning middle school end-of-course exams as readiness exams for high school math
- Providing feedback to middle schools on the performance of their students as 9th graders
- Providing better data and information to high schools about incoming students
- Bridging advising and curriculum development functions between middle and high school

The statewide GEAR UP project will be a primary partner in this work, although all major middle school initiatives will be engaged. Shared accountability and incentives to schools for successful transition will be examined.

The Postsecondary Connection - Reducing Remediation Rates

Similar to the Middle Schools Connection work, there are conditions that must be present in high school if students are to transition successfully to what is beyond. Research tells us that placement in development coursework is a strong predictor of college and workforce dropout. Although we have a better understanding of the indicators that predict developmental placement, most high schools leave the job of providing educational services to reduce those gaps to the next level of learning - either colleges or the workforce. If we know that the student is likely to be placed in developmental coursework, what are the implications for the junior and senior years?

Currently, two initiatives are underway that will lay the foundation for the proposed course of action:

- Both the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and KDE are working on alignment of standards in math and language arts.
- CPE is working to establish shared standards for admissions and placement among colleges and universities.

With standards issues clarified, KDE will be positioned to focus on:

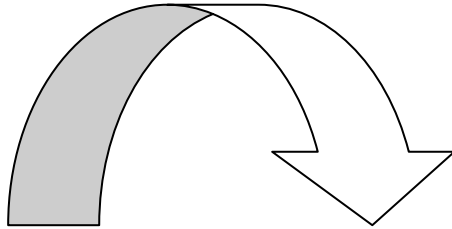
- Identifying the conditions that put students at risk for developmental placement
- Providing guidance to districts on identifying students who are at risk
- Identifying strategies to reduce the known risks before the student graduates

Topics to be examined include:

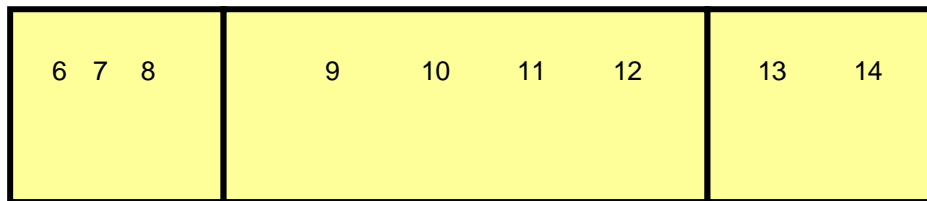
- The use of assessments to anticipate developmental needs. As an example, data tell us that over 50% of students scoring below 18 on the ACT are placed in developmental coursework in college. What are implications for the timing of ACT administration and the use of those results? If a student places below 18, what advising interventions should occur immediately? What adjustments should be made to their planned course of study?
- Can developmental services be provided in high school as part of the high school curriculum? How will they be delivered and by whom? How will we assess for success?
- Do students need math every year to prepare for transition from high school? If so, what alternatives can be provided to traditional math classes?

The Council on Postsecondary Education will be the primary partner in this work. A progress report will be delivered in December 2004 with a final set of recommendations to be delivered in April 2005.

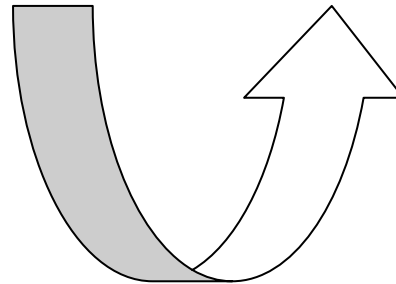
Moving Beyond the Grade 12 Endpoint Model



After students have mastered the core, they will begin to concentrate in their areas of highest interest and ability midway through their high school years. As part of this transition, they will build much closer connections to the levels of learning after high school. Again, both academics and support services should be bridged across the traditional institutional divides in support of the student as a shared responsibility.



As students master the core in early high school they may have a closer, more tightly aligned connection to middle school than is common today. It should appear as a continuum – in both academics and support services. The middle and high school should collaborate in support of students and their successful transition.



Expanding Learning Opportunity - Invoking Communities of Geography, Academics and Practice

Every student must exit high school prepared to face the challenges of the new economy with 21st century skills. Students will find themselves in an environment where the expectations of higher education and employers are rising, where the job market is more competitive and good jobs require higher-level skills, and where almost all decisions about life and work are more complex. Students need strong academic skills and also the ability to apply academics to solve complicated interdisciplinary problems, to work collaboratively, and to communicate effectively. Students need to learn about potential careers and have a familiarity with the world of work beyond classroom walls, they need to develop occupational competencies and they need to be contextual learners. Before they transition from high school, students need the opportunity to make strong connections beyond the schoolhouse walls. They need to “practice” what they will do next in life.

This means that part of the “infrastructure” of the secondary education system must evolve to contain more and stronger affiliations with the local community, with institutions of higher education, and with business and industry.

The following describes major components of work proposed for the coming year:

Promoting a Culture of Learning Beyond the High School

The Board has previously endorsed the idea that a primary objective of the Refocusing Secondary Initiative is to transition high school from a grade 12 endpoint model to a grades 10 - 14 transition model. The expectation is that every student will plan and prepare for a level of learning beyond high school associated with college, the workplace or the military.

As structural improvements are made at the secondary level to provide the services and supports students need to reach that goal, focus must be placed on convincing our students, schools and communities that high school should not be the culminating educational experience. The Department is engaged in a wide-ranging collaboration today around these issues with a group known as ThinkLink. ThinkLink, led out of the Office of the New Economy, involves partners from K12 education, postsecondary education, workforce development, economic development, and education stakeholder groups. ThinkLink is developing a public message concerning the economic imperatives for increasing educational attainment in Kentucky. As part of this larger initiative, the Department will focus on:

- Providing enhanced college and career awareness services to school advising functions, students and parents
- Helping schools identify and remove barriers to formal learning beyond high school, including academic tracks that lead nowhere, finances, regional trends, and legacies of under-education in communities
- Revising and enhancing the High School Feedback report so that the information it contains about outcomes for students beyond high school is more accessible and easily understood by students, parents and communities
- Making data and other resources available to schools that will help them communicate the economic imperatives of educational attainment to students on a personal level

This work is ongoing, closely aligned with ThinkLink and implementation of the Go Higher initiative. In the middle school, the GEAR UP initiative will be a primary partner in helping identify how to provide intensive supports to underserved and underachieving students. The Department will demonstrate Go Higher to the Board in December 2004 and make a second progress report in April 2005 with anticipation that the web-enabled student plan will by that time be integrated with Go Higher.

Access and Quality in Credit Based Transition Programs

At the same time that work is underway to promote education beyond high school and to reduce remediation rates, the way needs to be cleared for more equitable participation in credit based transition programs. Expanding opportunities for more high school students to enroll in dual credit courses, especially those that earn both secondary and postsecondary credit, is becoming an increasingly important strategy. Research indicates this practice is improving high school achievement and preparation for postsecondary education.

There are numerous regional and local initiatives in Kentucky forming to support increased participation in dual credit programs. In the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), especially, the number of dual credit offerings is growing rapidly. Still, there are barriers to access for many students and many areas of policy on which state policy guidance is missing or ambiguous. The

funding of these programs is a significant barrier to participation for many students. There is no uniform policy at either the K12 or postsecondary level on tuition options for high school students.

The Department proposes to work with the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Education Professional Standards Board to establish a more comprehensive P16 policy on access and quality in dual credit programs. Areas of study will include:

- The role of dual credit courses in the secondary system as a learning opportunity to which every student should have equitable access
- Identification of effective models and how they may be implemented, including the simple, single course enrollment model to full-day comprehensive programs
- Guidance for schools on local policies to facilitate course access, scheduling, transportation, grading and the awarding of credits, etc.
- How these programs will be funded and who will bear the cost of tuition
- The approval and certification requirements of instructors
- The need to ensure equitable access to both academically and technically oriented courses
- Admissions and placement requirements
- Approval of course content and assessments
- The need to ensure that student options are not limited to place and time

The Department will deliver an initial report and recommendations in October 2004. Final recommendations will be delivered in February 2005.

Learning Partners Beyond the Schoolhouse

Beyond the more traditional academic transition programs such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual credit and dual enrollment, the Department believes that there is huge untapped potential to engage students in learning with partners beyond the school walls and outside the education system. To build awareness in students about 21st century possibilities and to provide them with challenges in real world settings, the Department will partner with the Office of the New Economy and others to construct partnerships and identify effective models. Focus will be placed on removing barriers to try and ensure that students are not excluded from participation based on where they live or their socio-economic status.

These opportunities could take many forms, such as:

- Capstone senior projects
- Apprenticeships and Internships
- Research assistantships
- Service learning
- Learning experiences that take place outside the traditional school calendar
- Access to online courses and instructional resources
- Access to mentors and tutoring services

Technology will play a key role in linking students with external partners, especially when the learning partner is geographically distant. Aspects of this work will include facilitating the creation and sustaining of local partnerships and identifying statewide partnerships. Policy issues that must be addressed are similar to those associated with dual credit:

- The role of such opportunities as credit-generating experiences in the secondary system
- Identification of effective models and how they may be implemented

- Guidance for schools on local policies to facilitate access, certification, scheduling, transportation, grading and the awarding of credits
- How these programs will be funded and who will bear the cost
- The need to ensure that student options are not limited by place and time.

The Department will update the Board on these activities in February 2005. Included in the update, the Board will receive recommendations on the extent to which every student should be expected to participate in an external learning partnership before leaving high school.